



Bugchasers of Egypt,
Stanley B. Snodgrass,
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This book contains memoirs relating the experiences of Stanley Snodgrass and various colleagues in fighting tropical diseases mainly in Egypt, as well as Africa and China. Snodgrass, after many years' hiatus, continued his career in public health in Honolulu, where he has now retired. The connecting thread of these memoirs is Namru 3. Namru is an acronym for the US Naval Medical Research Unit. This organization originated in World War II to combat typhus, malaria and other epidemic and tropical diseases faced by soldiers and civilian populations. In 1946 Namru 3 was set up in Cairo, Egypt. It still functions today as the oldest and most versatile overseas infectious disease laboratory in the Department of Defense. It has been responsible since its foundation for helping control epidemics in Africa and preventing their spread to other parts of the world.

In 1946 Snodgrass was assigned to Namru 3. At the time he was not yet 21, a high school dropout with a wife pregnant with their first child. His only training was a five month course in the Navy School of Epidemiology. The Navy offered him a two year extension and a posting to Cairo. Young and adventurous, he grabbed the opportunity. As soon as he stepped through the door of the US Embassy in Cairo, where Namru 3 was then headquartered, he was dispatched to deal with an epidemic of relapsing fever in Imbaba. He soon helped fight a major cholera outbreak in 1947 which devastated Egypt, and saw the first use of cholera vaccine.

Snodgrass's memoirs of Namru 3 cover the period 1946-1948, and take up the first 7 chapters. This is followed by 12 chapters containing the memoirs of Namru 3 by Billy Cook, Warren Sanborn, and Raymond Warren, with connective narrative by Snodgrass. Among the topics covered are the 1947 outbreak of cholera, meningitis in Morocco, the formation of Namru 5 in Ethiopia, the expulsion of Namru from Egypt during the 1967 Six Day War between Egypt and Israel.

The memoirs are written in a breezy entertaining style. Anyone contemplating a career in epidemiology should read these accounts. For physicians whose practice keeps them in the Western World, and who have never seen an epidemic of cholera, or Rift Valley Fever, it is an instructive look into how public health functions in the face of rampant disease and into the history of medicine. For the layman the book is a fascinating account of medical detection and practice in the Third World.